A JAR FROM SIDON WITH THE NAME OF PHARAOH TAWOSRET

Archaeology & History in the Lebanon Issue Twenty Four: Winter 2006, Pp. 121-128.

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During the 2005 season, the British Museum excavations at Sidon have yielded three fragments of an important Egyptian jar (figs.1-3). They were discovered amongst baked mud bricks with large amounts of pottery adjacent to two large tannours. Made of polychrome faience, the jar was decorated in a style characteristic of the Ramesside Period. All three sherds bear portions of a hieroglyphic inscription that lends particular significance to the find. A string of names and epithets refers to Queen Tawosret, the erstwhile wife of Sety II and here identified in the role she assumed at the very end of the Nineteenth Dynasty – that of pharaoh of Egypt. Tawosret's independent rule was brief and appears to have lasted less than two years. As a consequence, the jar can be dated with great precision around 1190 BC, with the margin of error not exceeding some ten years at the utmost. It constitutes a valuable document on ongoing relations between Egypt and Sidon at a time of turmoil throughout the Levant, when migrating and plundering peoples poured in from the north aiming for Syria-Palestine and Egypt. While more fragments of the vessel might yet turn up, a speedy publication would seem desirable. The following, preliminary comments are offered on the basis of photographs supplied to the author by Claude Doumet-Serhal.

While the vessel was made of white faience, the inscription and pictorial decoration were drawn in black glaze, and certain areas coloured blue. Most likely this was originally a 'drop vase' – with a broad, rounded base and an elongated, cylindrical body narrowing slightly towards the top. All three fragments come from the lower body. They show parts of a floral motif that surrounded the base, consisting of an alternation of stylised lotus buds and petals, the latter filled in with blue glaze. Above this are the remains of the inscription, arranged in two horizontal bands that probably encircled the jar completely. The upper band was painted blue, the lower left white. It is not impossible that further bands of text existed, but no fragment preserves the upper third of the blue band, let alone what was once above it. Each band contained two lines of text departing in opposite directions to meet again halfway round the circumference of the vessel. The original situation can only be determined from the lower band, as the upper band preserves but portions of the line that reads from left to right (with left-facing hieroglyphs). In the lower band, the left-to-right text is largely preserved, running from the largest fragment (A) through the medium-sized (B) to the smallest one (C). On fragment C, this band preserves also the end of the mirroring text with right-facing hieroglyphs, thus showing the immediately adjacent back ends of two identi-

cal cartouches with the queen's birth-name. This suggests that the vessel's antithetic inscriptions largely duplicated each other, presumably only with minor variations in content. As we shall see, the inscriptions contain some errors, and all in all it is evident that the entire decoration was drawn in a certain haste.

Very little can be made today of the hieroglyphic traces in the upper band, although examination of the original might yet provide some clarity. In addition to the general weathering, their reading is hampered by the darkened wash of blue, and by the fact that the top of this band is nowhere extant. The traces on fragment A, including various bird signs, appear to rule out any of the queen's attested names and epithets. Fragment B, however, shows the title *nswt-bꞽty*, 'king of Upper and Lower Egypt'. In imitation of her predecessors, this title was also adopted by



1 Fragment A.



2 Fragment B.

Tawosret on becoming sole ruler. After Sety II's death, she had first acted as a coregent to King Siptah, but when he also died, Tawosret had herself proclaimed the new pharaoh, thereby assuming a capacity traditionally reserved for men. Following the title are the faded remains of a cartouche with Tawosret's throne-name, [Sa]t-Ra-mer(yt)-Amun, literally 'Daughter of Ra, beloved of Amun'. Its reading is aided by the presence of the same cartouche in the lower band, where it is better preserved. On fragment C, the upper band preserves the end of a second cartouche, which will once have contained the queen's birth-name Tawosret, and which still shows traces of the appended phrase *stpt.n Mwt*, 'chosen of Mut'. Again the reading is ascertained through analogy with a clearer cartouche in the lower band. The two names underscore Tawosret's kingly ambitions. The first part of the throne-name – 'Daughter of Ra' – recalls the 'son of Ra' title that formed part of the traditional titulary of a pharaoh. The phrase linking the queen to Amun, Egypt's national god, is in imitation of the Ramesside kings who had preceded her on the throne. All of them had used the phrase 'beloved of Amun' in their cartouches, reflecting the idea that Amun(-Ra) was 'king of the gods' and Pharaoh his son and earthly image. The phrase affixed to Tawosret's birth-name expresses a parallel association to Amun's consort Mut. Such a connection to this goddess is unique

to Tawosret and reflects the unusual situation that she happened to be a female ruler. Tawosret already used the epithet occasionally during the period of her coregency with King Siptah.[1]

For the left-to-right line in the lower inscription band, a running translation may be offered (with A, B and C denoting the respective fragments):

(A) *[.?. nṯr] nfr w[ꜥf] ḫꜣswt nswt-bꞽty nbt tꜣw* (sic) *nbt ḫpš* |(B) *nb ꞽrt <ḫt> Sꜣt-Rꜥ-mr(yt)-ꞽmn* |(C) *[Tꜣ-] Wsr(t)-stpt.n-Mwt*

(A) *The good [god], who subjects the foreign countries, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, lady of lands* [emend: *the Two Lands*], *lady of might,* |(B) *lady of action, Sat-Ra-meryt-Amun,* |(C) *[Ta]wosret, chosen of Mut.*



3 Fragment C.

Most of the titles employed are typical components of an Egyptian king's nomenclature. One of them, 'king of Upper and Lower Egypt', was already met in the upper band. Some others are here attested for the first time with reference to Pharaoh Tawosret. This obtains for the title *nṯr nfr*, 'the good god', whose reconstructed reading at the beginning of the line is quasi-certain. No alternative readings ending with *nfr* seem to suggest themselves, and there is little room for more expansive restorations – considering that the line occupied only one half of the vessel's perimeter.

The following epithet *w[ꜥf] ḫꜣswt*, 'who subdues the hill-countries', is identical to the second part of the queen's so-called 'Two Ladies name', as attested on a statue of hers from Heliopolis [2]. As the first component of that name, the statue gives *grg Kmt*, 'who sets Egypt in order'. It might be asked whether the *nfr*-hieroglyph in our inscription belonged to the first component of a variant Two Ladies name that is not attested otherwise. The sign, then, might even be *ꜥꜣ*, 'great', instead of *nfr*. What speaks against this idea is that the first component of the Two Ladies name would typically end with a noun and not an adjective. We may therefore adhere to the reading [*nṯr*] *nfr* proposed above.

The title 'lady of lands' goes unparalleled and an immediate male equivalent seems also unattested. In all probability, this is a corruption of *nbt tꜣwy*, 'lady of the *Two* Lands', a title occasionally employed both by ruling and *non*-ruling queens. Tawosret, too, already used it while she was still 'Great Royal Wife' of Sety II. The title was clearly modelled on the kingly equivalent 'lord of the Two Lands', which Tawosret adopted as well. Apparent instances of the male title antedating Tawosret's 'kingship' are probably to be regarded as defective writings of the feminine title, because we must bear in mind that the final *t* of feminine words was no longer pronounced [3]. Usually preceding the throne-name, the title 'lord of the Two Lands' was employed interchangeably, and in various combina-

tions, with the titles ‘the good god’, ‘king of Upper and Lower Egypt’ and ‘lord of action’ – all of which, it should be noted, recur in the present text.

‘Lady of might’ is another title not hitherto found for Tawosret – nor is it, in fact, for other queens. It is modelled on the male form ‘lord of might’, which from the late Eighteenth Dynasty is encountered with reference to kings [4]. It identifies the pharaoh in his archetypal role of victorious warrior, and it is remarkable here to find it applied to a female ruler. As so often, the title is just that and constitutes no evidence that Tawosret ever initiated – let alone conducted – any military campaign. It merely shows that she considered herself a full-fledged pharaoh.

‘Lord of action’ is another kingly title, here retained in its usual male form. It is a further title not otherwise attested for Tawosret. The normal expression for ‘action’ is *ỉr.t ḫt,* literally ‘doing things’, and the present omission of *ḫt,* ‘things’, is one more corruption in our inscription. The same omission is occasionally met elsewhere.

The two cartouches at the end of the line are the same as in the upper band and have already been commented on. It is noteworthy that the second cartouche should follow immediately after the first. Normally it would be introduced by the title *sꜣ Rꜥ*, ‘son of Ra, and/or by *nb ḫꜥw*, ‘lord of appearances’ – two further kingly titles, which have also been documented for Tawosret as a pharaoh [5]. It is probably for lack of space that the titles have here been omitted, and they may well have occurred in the mirroring line on the missing half of the jar.

The vessel constitutes important evidence that Egypt was still maintaining good relations with Sidon during the reign of Tawosret, notwithstanding political tensions back home and despite the wave of demographic upheaval that swept through the Levant. It would appear that, on their trail of chaos and destruction around 1200 BC, the Sea Peoples spared Sidon and other Phoenician cities, and the discovery of the jar goes some way to reinforce this impression. Between Egypt and Sidon, it still was business as usual. That being said, this jar was not an item of trade. Without a doubt, it originally fulfilled its purpose in a ritual context, for which Egyptian faience vessels were typically produced – as were indeed most objects of this brightly coloured material [6]. While sojourning at Sidon, Egyptians will have visited its temples and paid their respects to deities much akin to their own, some of whom they had come to regard as manifestations of particular Egyptian gods, and half a dozen were admitted to the Egyptian pantheon. As at home, certain Egyptian donations and votive offerings would be inscribed and presented in the name of the ruling pharaoh, who nominally was not only the ultimate mediator between man and god, but also the official figurehead and conduit of international relations – consolidated partly through these tokens, not merely of religious piety, but of fraternal diplomacy. Gifts to a temple served to please the gods and seek their blessings, but were also a means to strengthen ties with associated authorities. While this is valid for relations within a country, it is particularly evident for gifts to temples on alien soil, the homes of

non-Egyptian gods. Perhaps the most eloquent illustration of such pragmatism behind donations to foreign temples concerns Pharaoh Hakor of the Twenty-ninth Dynasty (early 4th century BC). Hakor presented elegant, granite altar-stands to the cities of Akko and Sidon. They appear to have been part of a larger series invoking the Egyptian god Sopdu, whose name survives on one of the fragments from Sidon [7], and who generically represented countries beyond Egypt’s eastern frontier. While the god was not native to these cities, the altars were gladly accepted as precious embellishments to their temples and did support the cults of the local deities, whom the Egyptians thought it expedient to assimilate with Sopdu. Here was a union of essentially unconnected gods to reflect a worldly alliance of different nations. For what Hakor’s altars were undoubtedly about is underscoring friendly political relations. At the time, this was altogether apposite in the face of a common adversary, from whose rule the Egyptians had only lately liberated themselves – the Persian emperors. Egypt remained under Persian attack and was keen on coalition building [8]. Back in the days of Tawosret, international relations in the ancient Near East were very different, but Egypt did have strong political and economic interests in the region that required sustaining – and which were increasingly threatened by, particularly, the arrival of the Sea Peoples. One typical way of maintaining relations with key partners was through all manner of symbolic gifts. This is probably the broader context in which we must view Tawosret’s vessel. Produced in a state-run workshop back in Egypt [9], it was conveyed to Sidon by some official on government business.

While far away from home, on expedition in deserts and distant countries, the Egyptians of the Middle and New Kingdoms turned to one deity in particular as an object of popular worship. This was not Sopdu but Hathor, the most venerated of Egyptian goddesses. In the temple at Serabit el-Khadim, a mining site in Sinai, Sopdu is occasionally represented, but it is Hathor who dominates. The Egyptians recognised her in a goddess whom the Semitic inhabitants of the region worshipped as Baalat; the latter is invoked in Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions that have been found at Serabit itself [10]. At Byblos, another prime destination for the Egyptians, they equated Hathor with Baalat Gebal as the ‘lady of Byblos’. Close associations developed also between Hathor and her further counterparts in the Levant: Astarte, Qadesh and Anat. Each of these Canaanite goddesses acquired Hathoric elements in their iconography and votive objects, and it was not long before their worship was exported to Egypt itself. At the ‘Temple of Obelisks’ in Byblos, late Middle Kingdom objects produced in Egypt include a wide range of votive items fashioned, significantly, of faience [11]. At the time of the New Kingdom, both within and outside Egypt, Hathor became the principal recipient of offerings in this material, and ‘lady of faience’ ranked among her epithets. This was concomitant with the fact that Hathor was also the ‘lady of turquoise’, linking her to the greenish blue material that was mined in Sinai under her patronage, while faience, with similar colours, served as its inexpensive equivalent. In view of these observations, there can be little doubt that Hathor was the primary dedicatee of the faience jar discovered in Sidon – at least as far as the Egyptians were concerned, and despite its donation to a non-

Egyptian temple. The chief deity of Sidon was Astarte, and it is highly likely that she was the actual recipient of the vessel, by virtue of her Hathor-like qualities. Hathor may once have been named upon the jar, perhaps in the blue (!) inscription band.

Being a female pharaoh with an inherently tenuous claim to the throne, Tawosret may have taken a special interest in closely associating herself with Hathor, this being one way of elevating her prestige. It is worth recalling that Hatshepsut, Egypt's most famous pharaoh-queen, had keenly aspired to close ties with Hathor. An important shrine to the goddess was integrated into Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahari, in Thebes. Hathor was popular with the Egyptians but, through her connections with foreign regions and their principal goddesses, also conveniently famous abroad. The cult of Hathor spread also south of Egypt proper, in Lower Nubia, as attested by shrines in Faras and Mirgissa. As an illustration of her propaganda value in displays of royal divinity, it is significant that it should be in Nubia that Queen Nefertari, consort of Ramses II, was assimilated with the goddess on a monumental scale. Adorning the front of her temple at Abu Simbel are colossal statues of the queen with Hathoric attributes: sistrum in hand, and with a composite crown including cow horns. Tawosret's own association with Hathor on ritual faience, while also attested for kings, may in part have served comparable purposes, if on a rather more modest scale. Outside Egypt proper, Pharaoh Tawosret recurs in various such contexts. She does so on votive faience from the temple of Hathor in Serabit el-Khadim [12] and from the temple of the same goddess at Timna, in the Negev [13]. Most interestingly, 'King' Tawosret is also attested by a faience drop vase from a temple at Tell Deir Alla in the central Jordan Valley, [14] and from the design and material of the object, the benefiting deity had again most probably 'Hathoric' associations.

The Deir Alla vessel represents a particularly close parallel to the specimen from Sidon, in being associated with a foreign political entity, rather than an Egyptian-exploited mining site. No doubt this jar was once adorned with a pair of cartouches. It only preserves Tawosret's birth-name with the 'chosen of Mut' epithet and, above it, the kingly title *nb ḫʿw*, 'lord of appearances'. This title was never used singly, and only its commonest counterpart, *nb tꜣwy*, 'lord of the two Lands', will have fitted in an equivalent amount of space above the missing cartouche with the throne-name [15]. The fact that there will have been two cartouches, and the kingly nature of the titles, both apparently went unappreciated in Yoyotte's interpretation. According to him, the Deir Alla jar could be either from the period of Tawosret's 'kingship' or from her preceding stint as a regent for King Siptah [16]. In actual fact there is no doubt that, like all other known faience that is inscribed with Tawosret's names, it was presented after she became sole ruler of Egypt. As had been the case with previous pharaohs, the ritual donation of this royal-name faience served to boost her credentials among a divine *and* human audience.

Considering the brevity of her reign, it is clearly soon after her accession to the throne that items affirming Tawosret's 'kingship' began to appear in the Levant. Her agents will have conveyed them, not only to places where archaeology has brought them to light, but no doubt to other places where Egypt had an interest to maintain some kind of influence. The Levant has yielded one more find, of a different nature, that seems to pertain to the reign of Tawosret. She is attested by a scarab found in Akko, which bears her birth-name with the 'chosen of Mut' epithet [17]. While theoretically it could date from her regency under Siptah, it was most probably made and taken abroad after Tawosret had been crowned 'king' on Siptah's death. It must have belonged to one of her travelling officials, whom it was to serve as an amulet that would summon Pharaoh's supernatural, protective powers. A further document was previously thought to be potentially connected with Tawosret's reign, but this can no longer be maintained. A letter received by Ammurapi, last king of Ugarit, had been sent from Egypt, not by Pharaoh, but by the all-powerful chancellor Bay [18]. While the latter is known to have occupied his supreme position under Siptah, it has long been assumed without proof that he retained it under Tawosret's rule. In fact, it is now an established fact that Bay fell from grace and was executed in year 5 of Siptah's reign,[19] so that the date of the Ugarit letter is narrowed down to the preceding five year period. Bay's death removed a likely obstacle to Tawosret's rise to kingly power and she may well have been behind his ultimate fate [20].

Notwithstanding Egypt's diplomatic relations with kings and other leading figures in the rich political tapestry that was the Levant, there was little that Egypt could do to halt the troubles descending upon the region from the northwest. Ugarit was soon destroyed by the Sea Peoples, never to rise again. And archaeologists found the Deir Alla vessel charred by fire in a level of destruction, which apparently came soon after its donation; scholars have been tempted to associate this, too, with the advancing Sea Peoples. Back in Egypt, Tawosret's demise and the transition to the Twentieth Dynasty were accompanied by internal conflict, which temporarily shifted attention away from events abroad. But a few years later, in the reign of Ramses III, a medley of marauding groups presented itself on Egypt's doorstep, claiming attention with a vengeance.

NOTES

1 Cf. the remarks by Yoyotte, 1962, p. 465-467.

2 Bakry, 1971.

3 Instances of *nbt tꜣwy* for non-ruling queens include Satnofret, wife of King Merenptah (Kitchen, 1982, p. 89); Ramesside references to Queen Ahmes-Nefertari; and various Ptolemaic queens (for the latter two, see Erman and Grapow 1928, p. 232 [5]). Both *nbt tꜣwy* and *nb tꜣwy* are found for the ruling Queen Hatshepsut; see *ibidem* 1928, p. 232 [4]. Apart from the Sidon jar, all attestations of Tawosret as 'lady of the Two Lands' antedate her 'kingship'; see Kitchen, 1982, p. 355 [5*, 9, 14*], 356 [5*, 6], 366 [6, 12] (asterisks, however, mark defective writings without the *t*). For the ruling Tawosret as 'lord of the Two Lands', see Kitchen, 1982, p. 351 [8-9, 13-4, 16], 352 [11-14], 373 [3].

4 Erman and Grapow, 1929, p. 269 [14].

5 'Son of Ra': Kitchen, 1982, p. 352 [ll. 3, 6, 8-9, 11-14]. 'Lord of appearances': *ibidem*, p. 351 [5, 13], 352 [6, 11-14], 353 [4, 15], 373 [3].

6 Patch, 1998.

7 See Giveon, 1984, col. 1108, with further references.

8 For this interpretation, compare the remarks by von Landau, 1904, p. 65-69.

9 For the state-controlled production of votive faience, see Pinch, 1993, notably p. 329-332, 360.

10 As was first realised by Gardiner, 1916, p. 12, 14-15.

11 Dunand, 1958, pls. 95, 99, 102-103, 108.

12 Petrie, 1906, figs. 146 [13] (a glazed vase), 148 [14] (a glazed *menat*), 149 [8, 9, 15-17] (glazed bracelets) and 151 [3] (a glazed ring-stand).

13 Rothenberg, 1972, p. 163, [166, Schulman, 1988, p. 122 [Eg. Cat. 41], pl. 121 [4], fig. 34 [3]. Only her birth-name with the epithet *<stpt.>n Mwt* is preserved; the latter suggests a date after the reign of Sety II (who is also represented at Timna), and so it dates from the time that Tawosret either ruled as a regent beside King Siptah or, more probably, on her own. Siptah is not attested at Timna.

14 Franken, 1961, p. 365 (the queen's birth-name is there misread as the throne-name of Ramses II, corrected by Yoyotte, 1962); van der Kooij and Ibrahim (eds.) 1989, p. 37, fig. 98, and p. 78; Franken 1992, p. 30-31, fig. 3-9 [5], p. 187, pl. 4 [b].

15 So Kitchen, 1982, 351 [5].

16 Yoyotte, 1962, p. 467.

17 First published by Keel, 1997, p. 536-537 [16], with a bibliography of earlier references. The photograph provided is important, as Keel's drawing and reading are incorrect. He proposes to read the cartouche as the throne-name of Ramses II *(Wsr-mꜣꜥt-Rꜥ-stp.n-Rꜥ)*, but he is certainly mistaken. The hieroglyph of the squatting goddess wears clearly the double crown of Mut, not the Maat feather. The two *t*-signs are also too flat and elongated to be interpreted as ill-carved sun-discs. For a completely identical spelling of the queen's name to that on the scarab, see the statue of Tawosret as a pharaoh published by Bakry, 1971.

18 Singer, 1999, p. 714-715.

19 Grandet, 2000.

20 As also suggested by Grandet, 2000, p. 342.

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